



Report to:	Schools Forum
Date of Meeting(s):	24th November 2022
Subject:	Investment in Wigan Learning Zone
Report of:	Cath Pealing. Assistant Director - Education
Contact Officer:	Cath Pealing
Summary:	Invest in Early Help in Schools opportunity
Recommendation(s):	To set aside funds from the Central DSG underspend reserves to support this program for 2 years from 2024.
Implications:	
<i>What are the financial implications?</i>	The Wigan Borough locality is required to contribute £120k per year for 2 years to access total annual funding of £500k+ (approx £1million for the 2 years). Given the focus of the intervention the proposal would be to meet 50% of the locality commitment from the Central DSG Underspend reserve.
<i>What are the staffing implications?</i>	Staff are recruited, retained and managed by WLZ
Risks:	There are no initial risks but the long-term risk is that it does not deliver the intended outcomes and we do not see the improved outcomes at the scale we would hope for.
Please list any appendices:-	PDF – WLZ capacity (explanation of who they are and what the project is). Word – WLZ – partnership with Wigan Council

1. Introduction

We know in Wigan that our focus needs to be on the earliest intervention. Too many children are being escalated up the system of referrals due to crisis and we believe that as one of our largest universal services that intervenes with our children and young people everyday, our schools are best placed to identify at the earliest point, the needs of our children and families and be able to support and sign post to the right support. However, we are also mindful of the resource implications in our schools at present and the growth in demand for support from our children and families so we believe that this may be a solution.

We have been approached by an organisation called West London Zone. Details of the organisation and the project are detailed in the attached appendices. This also describes the impact they have had to date.

Having read their brief and considered it, we met with the senior leaders and were really impressed with the programme, in particular as it draws in funding to support the project for 2 years.

As previously reported to forum, there was an underspend of £1.6m on central DSG in 2021/22, with c£0.650m currently uncommitted.

2. Detail

West London Zone have been delivering a link worker in schools model in London since 2015.

They have investment to pilot the approach outside London and want to partner with **only** 3 local authorities.

They will link with the existing system and VCSEs and will compliment both Supporting Families and Mental Health in Schools Offer.

As part of the funding model they have philanthropic funding for ten years and also attract central government funding. **This means the Wigan System (including schools) will need to contribute 30 % of the funding and they bring 70%.**

They claim 75% improvement in emotional health and wellbeing and 40% improvement in maths and reading.

Further detail of the offer and the Wigan proposal is in the attached word appendix.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

We believe that this program will support and enhance our current offers around early help and will provide greater connection from schools for our young people and their families into the support they need from our partners including the VCSEs. It should also support to improve the outcomes of our children and young people with their mental health, academic achievement and socially.

Further detail around how schools/children and families will be selected will be worked through once we have all funding secured. It would be helpful to set up a subgroup of school leaders to support with this.

It is recommended that Schools forum agree to earmark £120k of the current £650k uncommitted Central DSG underspend reserve to support this program on commencement in September 2024.